

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Potters Industries Inc

North Carolina Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Potters Industries of Apex Reaches ISO 9000

Client Profile:

Potters Industries, located in Apex, North Carolina, and part of the PQ Corporation, is the world's largest facility for turning recycled glass into beads of engineered glass materials serving the highway safety, polymer additive, metal finishing, and conductive particle markets. A major portion of the company's glass bead production is used for highway safety markings, providing the light-reflective lane markings found on highways around the world. Potters has developed a product line that includes impact beads for cleaning and strengthening metals, reinforcing additives for plastics, media for grinding and dispersing, metal-coated particles to provide electromagnetic shielding interference of electronic parts, and beads for friction reduction in oil drilling. The Apex facility employs 65 people. Apex's 65 employees convert recycled glass into 100 million pounds of beads annually.

Situation:

The management team at Potters Industries wanted to become ISO registered. An ISO overview class offered by the Industrial Extension Service (IES) at North Carolina State University, a NIST MEP network affiliate, provided the answer.

Solution:

Potter Industries executives, along with managers from two other companies, attended the ISO 9000 Technical Assistance Program (TAP) classes taught by IES specialist, Barbara Williams. "We were so impressed with Barbara," said Gordon Hill, plant manager and engineering manager, "that we chose to go to Greensboro to take her class (instead of one closer taught by someone else)." Barbara holds related certifications as an ASQ Certified Quality Auditor (CQA), a RABQSA Quality Management System Lead Auditor (QMS-LA), and as a Plexus Systems Certified Trainer for ISO 9000, ISO/TS 16949, and ISO 14001. Phil Mintz, another ISO specialist, led the pre-assessment audit. When Mintz noted some problems or nonconformance issues during the pre-assessment audit, he suggested how to make improvements. Potters Industries received its ISO 9000 certification in December 2005. "One of the biggest benefits of ISO certification," said Hill, "is that written procedures allow operators to switch more easily from one task to another. That was a big culture change for us, but now it's ingrained in what we do." Hill depended on IES even after completing the ISO class. "Williams and the rest of the ISO specialists don't end their assistance in the classroom," said Hill. "They're only a phone call away whenever one of their client companies needs help."

Results:

- * Achieved ISO 9000 certification.
- * Established written procedures.

Testimonial:

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"Now we look proactively at what causes problems. We at Potters Industries in Apex redefined what preventive action requires, and that means being customer compliant."

Gordon Hill, Plant Manager and Engineering Manager